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THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE TIGRIS ACCORDING TO THE SUMERIAN LITERARY COMPOSITION LUGAL*

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INTRODUCTION

WITH his edition of Lugal, J. van Dijk has provided us with an authoritative textual basis for the task of interpreting this important text, the longest Sumerian narrative known to date.¹ In the following pages, I want to contribute to this task my understanding of the central mythological theme: the creation of mountains and the yearly flood of the Tigris. The reason for working out a new interpretation of this theme is based on my conviction that van Dijk's interpretation, as stated in the introduction to his edition, cannot be correct. He believes that human observation of the changing environment before, during, and after the last ice age was kept alive and eventually recorded in the text of Lugal, in other words, that the text contains remembrances of human experiences during that time-span. His principal evidence is a phrase in line 335 containing the words "ice," "accumulating," and "to melt." Up to this mysterious phrase, the text can be summarized as follows.

It opens with a ritual setting, a scene from a festival of Ninurta, presumably in his temple Ešumeša in Nippur: Ninurta sat "widely" and happily on his throne. An and Enlil were present and consumed beer; Bau presented the prayers of a king, and Ninurta decided destinies (ll. 18–21). A simple "on that day" switches back into the mythical past, and the story begins: Ninurta's weapon Multitude Flattener (šár-ūr), who "had his eye on the Kur,"² told his master about Asag: "An impregnated green earth. Earth gave birth to a fearless hero," Asag, who, without being nursed or educated, grew up in the Kur where it³ eventually produced widespread offspring. Its members called themselves by the names of different stones and organized themselves into a society with king and warriors (gàr-ra-du-um). Asag seated itself on a throne and judged the land, "a lord like you" as the weapon Multitude Flattener told Ninurta (26–38). The latter, awakening to the challenge, "said Uh! Ah! An shook, set earth to his feet (i.e., went up to heaven) . . . Enlil became bewildered, disappeared (?) in Ekur" (70–71). Then, he arose, reaching heaven in the process, and rode eight winds to

* Abbreviations of works cited in this paper generally follow those used in the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.

¹ J. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GÁL: Le Récit épique et didactique des Travaux de Ninurta, du Déluge et de la Nouvelle Création*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1983). The text is here simply quoted as Lugal throughout.

² I leave the term untranslated. As employed in Lugal, kur denotes the area outside the Babylonian plains where the mountains were placed by Ninurta.

³ Despite the clearly anthropomorphic or, at least, animate nature of Asag in the story, Asag is grammatically inanimate. Accordingly, he is referred to as "it" throughout.

the rebel land. Trees were overturned, forests razed. As he set foot in his boat, heading for battle, “the Tigris’ waters churned” (89). Destruction engulfed the rebel land, and “its people set the birthday of Asag as their day of calamity” (105). Meanwhile, Multitude Flattener “flew like a bird . . . , circled heaven’s base to learn what to do” (110–12). Returning to his master, “he related the counsel of the Kur” (116). He advised circumspection, stressing that Ninurta had never gone into a battle that great, had never raised his arm in such a “playground of Inanna” (137). When it finally came to actual combat between the two antagonists, “the day turned to pitch. Asag rose at the head of battle, pulled heaven from its base and took it as weapon in his hand . . . , toppled like a wall toward Ninurta, son of Enlil The water dried up in the Kur. The tamarisks were flattened. The skin of the earth cracked. Reed thickets caught fire and washed heaven in blood” (167–78). But the battle of the giants remained indecisive. Multitude Flattener ran out of ideas; Ninurta lost his steam. Help was needed. So the weapon traveled to Enlil in Nippur. The mission was a success. Multitude Flattener returned with the assurance of Ninurta’s impending victory in the form of a pronouncement from Enlil: “After he has taken Asag by its strength, pierced (its) gall, may my son enter Ekur” (230–31). It still takes a considerable number of lines to tell that story. Line 304 speaks of the “dead Asag.” Then, Ninurta transformed the corpse with his creative words: “From now on, it shall not be called Asag. Stone shall be its name. Stone Zalag shall be its name. Stone shall be its name. That is it: its exterior shall be the grave. Its heroism shall be for the lord” (327–30).

The scene is now set for a reorganization of the earth with stone as new building material. But before introducing the theme of the creation of the rockpile—that is, the mountains—the primeval, “premontane,” situation is summarized in lines 334 f.

Previous Translations of Lines 334 f.

The lines are preserved in two slightly differing Old Babylonian sources. A late text with an Akkadian translation is not preserved.

H1 u₄-bi-a a-silim ki-ta du a-gàr-ra nu-um-dé

II [] silim ki-ta du a-gàr-ra nu-um-[]

H1 A.MÛŠ du₈-du₈-du₈-ù u₄ zal-le-da-gin₇ kur-ra ri-a ba-ni-ib-il-a

II A.MÛŠ.DI du₈-ù-du₈-du₈ zal-le-da-gin₇ kur-ra é-ri-a ba-ni-ib-il-[]

Discussing the occurrence of the phrase A.MÛŠ.DI-gin₇ du₈-a in the Enlil hymn, A. Falkenstein translates the lines:⁴

Damals ergoss sich kein glückbringendes Wasser, das aus dem Boden kommt, auf die Flur, eiskaltes Wasser, das alles *anfüllte*, wie der aufleuchtende Tag, brachte im Bergland Verwüstung.

The translation seems unlikely: why should the destructive water be ice-cold, and what is the tertium comparationis of such a process and the breaking of daylight? There are two obvious lexical difficulties in the translation. As Falkenstein himself acknowledges by writing the word “anfüllte” in italics, du₈, “to fill,” is questionable. The Sumerian

⁴ A. Falkenstein, *Sumerische Götterlieder* (Heidelberg, 1959), vol. 1, p. 61.

du₈ is actually translated with *malû* once, namely, in the idiom *malû ša HAR-tu* (Aa VIII/1, 140), making the simple equation du₈ = *malû* less likely. The second lexical difficulty is the translation “Verwüstung” for é-ri-a. The standard Akkadian translations are *namû* and *harbu*, “steppe, pasture” and “wasteland.” They fit the context admirably. There is no indication that é-ri-a can also designate the process by which land becomes “wasteland.”

T. Jacobsen gives the following translation of the lines in his summary of the plot of Lugal:⁵

At that time the waters of the earth coming from below did not come pouring over the fields, (nay!) as ice long accumulating they rose in the mountains on the other side.

He obviously reads a-ki for a-silim (DI) in line 334. Van Dijk collated both texts and reads DI, thus invalidating Jacobsen’s reading. The translation “. . . ice . . . accumulating” is for amagi (A.MÛŠ(DI)) du₈-du₈-du₈ as based on the equation du₈ = *kamāru ša šurîpi*, “to store, said of ice” in Aa VIII/1, 142. This translation removes the first lexical difficulty in Falkenstein’s interpretation and at the same time establishes the reading and meaning of the complex A.MÛŠ(DI). “Long” is the translation for u₄-zal-le-da of text H1. I cannot verify this translation from lexical sources, and I am unsure whether this meaning should be derived from phrases like u₄ n ba-zal-la-ta, “after n days had elapsed.” “In the mountains on the other side” creates further difficulties: kur cannot mean “mountains” in our context because it precedes the creation of mountains (hur-sag) by Ninurta.⁶ “On the other side” is the translation of ri-a of text H1 and leaves the é-ri-a of text II unclear and hard to explain, while ri-a may easily be understood as an erroneous omission or sandhi spelling. Moreover, ri as a deictic particle does not seem to occur independently. It is attached to a noun as attribute, as, for example, in gú-ri, “the other bank.”

Van Dijk translates:

Ce jour-là, l’eau salubre ne sortant plus de la terre, ne montait pas sur les champs, puisque, la glace entassée partout, le jour où elle commença à fondre, portait la destruction dans la Montagne.

His translation “to melt” for zal in line 335 represents a clear advance over Falkenstein’s unlikely comparison and Jacobsen’s dubious translation “long.” While I am unable to verify the equation zal = *naharmuṭu ša šurîpi*, which van Dijk quotes in note 123 of his introduction, *naharmuṭu* is equated with zal, does mean “to melt,” and is said of ice. Van Dijk disregards the equative postposition and thus is able to treat the phrase u₄ zal-le-da as a participial construction functioning as a relative clause, thus avoiding the nonsensical “like the melting day.”

A New Translation of the Lines

The sequence of the three translations of lines 334 f. quoted above demonstrates step-by-step progress in clarifying the first part of line 335. Jacobsen used the equation

⁵ T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven and London, 1976), p. 130.

⁶ Jacobsen assumes that hur-sag denotes the

foothills and kur the mountains. The theme of the rockpile which becomes the hur-sag demonstrates with all clarity that this assumption is not tenable.

du₈ = *kamāru ša šurīpi*, “to store, said of ice,” thereby overcoming Falkenstein’s difficulty with the meaning of du₈. Van Dijk amplified Jacobsen’s insight by noting that *zal* has a meaning which fits the context, namely “to melt.” Some problems still remain, however, and a plausible and cogent interpretation of the meaning of the lines has not yet been achieved. By rejecting Jacobsen’s “on the other side” for *ri-a* in text H1 and the meaning “destruction” for *é-ri-a* in text I1 and adopting, instead, the standard Akkadian translation “wasteland,” we gain a contrast to *a-gàr-ra* in line 334: the waters do not “pour on the fields” but are “carried in the wasteland.” The qualification *ki-ta du* for water occurs also in the story “How the grain came to Sumer.”⁷ There, Ninazu suggests that his brother Ninmada go to the Kur, “the Kur where barley and flax grow, Swift River where water keeps coming from the ground (a *ki-ta du-du* []).” Swift River is a name of the Tigris, and the place where water keeps coming from the ground may well be the spectacular Tigris tunnel, which was regarded as source of the river at least by the Assyrians.⁸ Leaving aside, for now, the equative phrase I propose the following translation of 334 f.:

During those days the wholesome waters that come from the ground did not pour on the fields.
Like . . . they (the waters) were “carried” in the Kur in the wasteland.

In order to understand the equative phrase, we have to come to grips with the puzzling phrase *kamāru ša šurīpi*, “to store, said of ice.” One may think of the Old Babylonian “ice house” in Terqa where, as S. Page has demonstrated with the help of parallels from more recent and more detailed Near Eastern sources,⁹ ice could have been stored throughout the year. The phrase might be a technical term for one aspect of the procurement, transport, or storage of ice. However, the context suggests a natural setting. But then, how could a Babylonian know about “entassée,” “accumulating” ice in its natural setting short of climbing Mt. Ararat. Unwilling to follow van Dijk’s idea that the line contains the memory of the last ice age, I suggest simply that here “ice” means “snow.” The two terms may not have been strictly differentiated in Sumerian and Akkadian. Sumerian seems to have only one word for both, i.e., *amagi*. The word *šeg*₈, a reading of A.MÛŠ.DI with the translation *šurīpu*, is undoubtedly the same word as *šeg* and means “precipitation,” whether rain (cf. the equation *šeg* = *zunnu*) or snow (cf. the equation *šeg* = *šalgu*). Consequently, *amagi* means “frozen water on the ground,” whether snow or ice. The “stored” or “accumulating” *amagi* may thus be understood as a term for the snowpack of the high mountains in winter. The notion of the snowpack makes a passage from the Astrolabe understandable: there, Kislimu, the coldest month of the year, is characterized by the phrase *hegallu u nuhšu uktammaru*, “plenty and abundance are stored up.” The image of the snowpack also makes good sense in the passage from the Enlil hymn that prompted Falkenstein to deal with lines 334 f.: “The wide-spread places of the Kur place tribute before him (the king who is blessed by Enlil). Piled up like snow, it is the things of the circle of the earth.” The “melting packed packed packed snow,” the “melting snowpack,” for short, does not, however, fit into the context as a figurative comparison. It makes no sense to

⁷ TMH NF III 5.

⁸ A description of the locality can be found in C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien, Einst und Jetzt*,

vol. I (Berlin, 1910), pp. 430 ff.

⁹ XVII RAI, pp. 181 ff.

say that water goes to waste like that of the melting snowpack if that snowpack is recognized as store of the spring flood. Consequently, I assume that the function of the equative is what may be termed additive rather than figurative. We arrive then at the following translation:

During those days the wholesome waters that come from the ground did not pour on the fields. (They) as well as (those of) the melting snowpack were “carried” in the Kur in the waste land.

Lines 354 f. and 705

Lines 334 f. describe the condition of the Kur and the Tigris before the creation of the mountains: plenty of water existed in the Kur, spring water and melt water. Yet it went to waste there and did not reach the Tigris. The Tigris existed, but without the waters of the Kur, it did not flood and did not reach the sea. The result was “an evil famine which did not let anything be born” (l. 343). This, in turn, caused an end to the work on the “little rivers,” presumably the arms of the lower Tigris. Ninurta ends this deplorable situation by creating the rockpile in the Kur, which allowed him to add the waters of the Kur to the Tigris: “What was scattered was collected. What the swamps had consumed in the Kur he bundled and gave to the Tigris” (356–58). What exactly is the function of the rockpile in Ninurta’s hydraulic scheme? How were the waters “collected”? Our modern answer would be that the rockpile provided the slope. It seems to me that the story provides this answer also. Lines 354 f. follow the statement about the creation of the rockpile and precede that about the augmentation of the waters of the Tigris with those of the Kur. Thus the lines occur in a place in the story that can be expected to express the notion of how the creation of the rockpile could have the results that are described. I quote text L1, the best-preserved Old Babylonian text for this passage, and b1, the only late text preserved at this point:

L1 a-kala-ga na₄ im-da-sá
b1 a-kala-ga [] im-da-sá
me-e dan-nu-[] ab-ni iš-nu’-[]

L1 i-ne-šè a-e kur da-rí-eš ki-a nu-um-e₁₁-dè
b1 i-ne-šè a kur da-[] ki-a nu-un-e₁₁-dè
i-na-an-na mu-[] iš-tu er-se-ti ana šadîⁱ ul il-lu-ú

Current translations of these lines are implausible. Jacobsen translates the verb DI as “followed along,” van Dijk as “dompta.” Both translations are ad hoc and do not seem to be confirmed by lexical evidence. G. Pettinato translates correctly “wetteiferte.”¹⁰ The competition between rock and the “strong” water probably refers to the process of erosion, particularly the cutting of valleys. The cliff-edged valleys, canyons,

¹⁰ In my MS of Lugal which stems from my days as a student in Heidelberg and for which I could use Falkenstein’s MS I find penciled in nu’ for BE in the Akkadian translation of the verb DI and, incidentally, e₁₁ for bād in the Sumerian text of l. 355; the latter is commented “in Chefs (i.e., Falkenstein’s)

Ms., nach Kollation.” Pettinato, *Das altorientalische Menschenbild und die sumerisch-akkadischen Schöpfungsmythen* (Heidelberg, 1971), p. 92:25, translates “wetteiferte” but reads *iš-miṭ*. AHw. reads *iš-nu’[-un]* s.v. *šanānu* and refers to Pettinato’s translation.

and gorges of the upper Tigris should have demonstrated this process with sufficient clarity to the premodern observer.

Line 355 means in literal translation: "Now, by the waters the Kur forever could not be 'gone up' from the earth." The Akkadian translator was unwilling, or unable, to account for the unusual transitive construction of e_{11} in Sumerian. A conceptual difficulty is revealed when we ask whether the statement implied the notion that water did "go up the Kur" before Ninurta's creation of the rockpile. "Yes," the Babylonians may have answered, "as long as there were no mountains nothing prevented the waters from flowing into the Kur." Jacobsen seems to reckon with such a notion when he writes: "... Ninurta built a stone wall, the near ranges, which would protect the land and would serve also as a dike to keep the waters of the Tigris from going east into the mountains" (*Treasury*, p. 130). The protective function of the rockpile is, however, not consistent with the plot of the story. Nowhere is it said that the scarceness of water in the Tigris was due to a loss of water to the Kur; it was due to the unavailability of the spring and melt water originating in the Kur. The problem was not to keep water out of or in Babylonia but to obtain it from the Kur. The valleys, gouged out by the "competition of the strong waters with the stone," were probably seen as guarantors of the inevitability of the waters' course from the Kur through the mountains to the Tigris. In the valleys, the waters were captured and could not escape because, as everybody knows, "they cannot go up."

At the end of the text, Ninurta's accomplishments are summarized in a sequence of nine parallel sentences. The fifth of these, line 705, refers to his hydraulic feat: *ur-sag-e a-e sag-an-ta giri im-mi-gar-ra-aš*. Van Dijk translates this as: "aux eau dont le Héros avait tracé la voie d'en haut." The translation omits the word *sag*. Because of the qualification *an-ta*, it is probably to be understood according to the equation *sag-an-ta* = *pūtum elītum*, "upper front side."¹¹ The "front side" should be that side of the mountains which faces Babylonia; "upper" expresses the notion that the spring and melt waters originate in the upper reaches of the slopes facing Babylonia. Thus the phrase expresses the Babylonian's satisfaction and gratefulness that the plentiful waters of the Kur were channeled by Ninurta in such a way that they ran off the mountains in the right direction. The same notion is expressed in lines 5–8 of the Marduk hymn:¹² "who directs the rivers from the interior of the mountains, who opens the springs in the interior of the alps, who gives away (*nāšir*) the flood of plenty to all settlements."

Interpretation

How could the story of making the Tigris into the river as the Babylonians knew it have evolved? How did the Babylonians arrive at their particular explanation? Van Dijk assumes that the story transmits remembrances of what actually happened in the distant past. The "ice" mentioned in line 335 is, in his view, the ice of the last ice age. While that ice covered the ground, "les eaux bienfaisantes ne sortaient pas de la terre et n'irriguait pas les champs" (vol. 1, p. 33). When the text speaks of the Tigris as not reaching the sea, it refers even to a time before the last ice age: "Le Tigre n'existait pas

¹¹ MSL 13, 250, sec. 13, 16'.

¹² *AFO* 19, 61.

encore et ne finissait pas dans le golfe Persique: il est bien connu qu'avant la dernière époque glaciaire telle était la situation géologique" (vol. 1, p. 34). The presumed flood that terminates the ice age in the story (van Dijk probably thinks of the pluvial period) is seen as the weapon with which Ninurta overcame Asag. Asag therefore stands for that which preceded the end of the last ice age: "Est-ce le froid?" (vol. 1, p. 26). "Il est . . . le vent du nord" (vol. 1, p. 23).¹³ Van Dijk obviously notes similarities in his understanding of the history of the last ice age and passages in the text and concludes that these similarities are no coincidence but actual remembrances of these times many thousands of years earlier, thus demonstrating an uncanny stream of tradition. How observations of processes measurable in a geological time-frame could be possible in the first place and how, in fact, they could remain comprehensible to the listeners in the hot plains of the Tigris thousands of years after the events is not contemplated.

Jacobsen understands the story as an anthropomorphization of natural events: "The natural events underlying the myth are apparently the appearance of the thunderstorms in the spring and their spending themselves over the mountains where their waters and those of the melting snow swell the Tigris and its tributaries, thus causing the yearly flood. The myth presents the raging of the thunderstorms over the mountains as a battle between Ninurta and . . . Azag . . ." (*Treasures*, p. 130). The problem with this interpretation is the implied identification of a cyclic event of nature, the occurrence of thunderstorms in spring over the mountains, with a battle that took place once in the past. While that battle initiated a cyclic event, the flooding of the Tigris, it has no part in this or any other cycle. The interpretation is also not consistent with the role of thunderstorms in the story. These are a means that Ninurta uses in battle, but the resulting rain water is not reckoned as part of the water supply of the Kur, which runs, after the creation of the mountains, down into the Tigris.

I believe that the key to understanding that part of the story with which we are concerned here can be found in the very common pattern of mythological etiology: one simply assumes that some feature of the natural environment did not exist in the past, and one speculates about the reasons for and the consequences of its non-existence. Then, one introduces a divine agent with the special skills and powers to create the missing feature. The resulting story is sometimes so close to fact that we may wonder whether the ancients derived their knowledge from actual observation which survived in the stream of tradition. Compare, for example, the mythological theme of how the gods brought grain and sheep down from the mountains. The prehistorian, working with bones and carbonized seeds, arrives at the same conclusion. We may think that the myth contains and preserves the experience of Neolithic folk who brought grain and sheep from their mountain homes into the plains. However, the myth may simply contain a speculation that happens to be correct. The inhabitants of the plains knew of the abundance of domestic and, more telling, the wild varieties of grain and sheep in the surrounding mountains. Combining this knowledge with their belief that what exists came about by divine action in the past, they arrived at their story.

¹³ Jacobsen, in *Toward the Image of Tammuz and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 125, suggests a simi-

lar cyclical interpretation: "We shall state only that we believe Asag, 'The Crippler', to typify the frigid cold of winter . . ."

The story about making the Tigris what it was for the Babylonians was built on speculation about the origin of the yearly flood. The flood was recognized as deriving from snow-melt and spring waters in the mountains facing the Babylonian plains. The mountains provided the slope that allowed the water to run off, in the process carving channels by which the far-off plains were reached. According to the pattern of mythological etiologies, one simply assumed a stage in which mountains, slope, and channels did not exist. The consequence was scarceness of water in the plains. Enter Ninurta, the protagonist and champion of the valiant farmer of the plains, to provide with the Tigris the desired abundance of water by creating that which made it possible to tap the abundant sources of the Kur, namely, the mountains and valleys.

Why Just the Tigris?

The transformation of dead Asag into stone by word of Ninurta suggests the notion that all stone was created at that moment and that consequently, the rockpile represented the raw stage of mountain formation on a global level. The same global notion is implied in Ninurta's dedication of the mountains to Ninmah, who acquired the name Ninhursaga—"Lady of the Mountains." Ninhursaga was not considered the patron deity of a specific mountain area but a deification of mountains in general. In the context of such global dimensions, it comes as a surprise that the creation of the mountains served to channel water into the Tigris alone and that the Euphrates is not mentioned in the text. This is all the more surprising, since the Euphrates was clearly the more important source of water in Babylonia as a whole and since Nippur, the place where the story is set ritually, was located on the banks of the Euphrates.¹⁴ Must the origin of the text not be sought in an environment of agriculturalists who irrigated their fields and orchards with water from the Tigris?

An actual reference exists to just such an environment, namely, the area of Lagash. Cylinder A of Gudea starts with a prelude in heaven: when the "destinies were decided in heaven and on earth" Lagash drew attention to itself by "raising its head to heaven." Enlil, thereupon, cast "a good eye" on its god Ningirsu (Cyl. A I 1-3). The following lines (4-9) can be understood as a description of the concrete result of this sign of benevolence; the speaker is not identified in the text.¹⁵

Has not that which is befitting appeared shiningly in our city?

Has not the interior returned to its bank?

Has not the interior of Enlil returned to its bank?

Has not the interior returned to its bank?

Does not the mighty swell glitter, the awe laden?

Has not the interior of Enlil—it is the Tigris—brought sweet water?

The passage seems to express the notion that Lagash and its divine Lord Ningirsu were blessed by Enlil with the flood of the Tigris. The prominent position of the

¹⁴ According to a letter from Kassite Nippur, Tigris water might have reached the area of Nippur at that time thus complementing the—surely more abundant—water resource of the Euphrates (cf. Biggs, *JCS* 19, 97: 41 and comments on p. 102).

¹⁵ Falkenstein's assumption that the speaker is Enlil (*AnOr* 30, 178) would mean that Enlil speaks of himself in the first (l. 4) and the third (ll. 6 and 9) person.

passage, the very beginning of the composition, moreover, suggests that this blessing was understood as central to life in Lagash. A story of how and when the flood of the Tigris came about would fit well, given the Lagash environment. That Lugal as a whole does belong to the Lagash tradition is confirmed by a number of details: (1) text H, a small fragment, has Ningirsu for Ninurta in the two places where this name occurs on the fragment; (2) the wife of Ninurta in the story is Bau; the wife of Ningirsu is Girsu and not Ninnibru, the wife of Ninurta in Nippur;¹⁶ (3) part of the blessing of diorite is to stand at the “water drinker place” (ki-a-nag) in the Eninnu, Ningirsu’s temple in Girsu.¹⁷

Thus there are many reasons to identify Lagash as the origin of Lugal, and since the Lagashites recognized their basis of wealth in the flood of the Tigris,¹⁸ a Lagashite origin explains why it is only the story of the Tigris which is told in Lugal. Why the story was transferred to the Nippur area and firmly anchored in a festival of Ninurta in Ešumeša, his Nippur temple, is still an open question. One might guess that this Nippurization represented upgrading a provincial story to the Babylonian level and that this may have been connected, in some way, with the process of the unification of Babylonia during the Ur III period.

¹⁶ Bau was venerated in the Ešumeša as demonstrated amply by the offering lists from the Isin period. (See M. Sigrist, *BiMes* 11, 145). On the mythological level, however, we should expect Ninnibru as Ninurta’s wife by analogy to Angim.

¹⁷ Van Dijk goes very far in interpreting aspects of the story as related to Lagash. He believes that l. 381 has Ninurta enter his temple Ešumeša. “Il est donc probable que quand Ninurta s’embarque sur son bateau processionnel, le Makarnunta³e, l. 650, il a quitté Nippur et il continue son voyage vers Girsu” (vol. I, p. 48). L. 381 is part of a speech of Ninmah in which she expresses a resolve to future action:

If/when/as I (?) have walked in Ešumeša, the place where he (Ninurta) raises his eyes,
I will cut the thread . . .

Whatever this may mean it does not state that Ninurta is in Nippur. Later on in the story, Ninmah joins Ninurta, who is still in the Kur as is evident

from his welcoming words: “Woman, as you have come to the Kur” (390). The blessing and cursing of stones also takes place in the Kur, and it is the Kur from which Ninurta departs when he sets foot in his boat (650).

¹⁸ Modern opinion differs from this view in two points. First, one has noted that the timing of the flood of the Tigris, and even more of that of the Euphrates, comes at an unfavorable point in the agricultural cycle, namely, during the grain harvest, and consequently represents more of a threat than a blessing. Second, R. M. Adams has observed that because of the rather violent nature of the Tigris, its waters were used for large-scale irrigation only during and after the technically advanced Hellenistic period (*Heartland of Cities* [Chicago, 1981], pp. 6 f.). H. Nissen summarizes the common opinion that the area of Lagash derived most of its water from the Euphrates (*AS* 20, 20). In light of the role ascribed to the Tigris in the texts discussed above, these opinions should be reconsidered.